



MEDIA ADVISORY

December 27, 2016

Contacts:

Doug Carlson, Information Officer – (916) 653-5114

Doug.Carlson@water.ca.gov

Ted Thomas, Information Officer – (916) 653-9712

Ted.Thomas@water.ca.gov

Elizabeth Scott, Information Officer – (916) 712-3904 (mobile at survey site)

Elizabeth.Scott@water.ca.gov

First Snow Survey of the Season Scheduled for January 3; Snowpack's Water Content Is Below Average, but It's Still Early

SACRAMENTO – The Department of Water Resources (DWR) will conduct its first media-oriented manual snow survey of Water Year 2017 at 11 a.m. on January 3 at Phillips Station, just off Highway 50 near Sierra-at-Tahoe Road approximately 90 miles east of Sacramento.

Electronic readings of the Sierra Nevada mountain snowpack today peg its statewide water content at 10.5 inches, 72 percent of the December 27 average. (The list at the end of this advisory has the statewide snow water equivalents on January 1 from 2002 through 2016.)

The Phillips snow course, which has been [measured each winter](#) since 1941, is one of dozens that will be traversed during a 10-day period around January 1 to determine the water content of the snowpack, which normally contributes about 30 percent of California's water when it melts. Manual readings supplement DWR's electronic data.

It's too soon to know whether this winter's wet season will deliver enough rain and snow to move California closer to the end of the state's five-year drought. The snowpack usually is at its deepest and most water-laden around April 1, so weather watchers won't know with certainty what kind of wet season it has been until then.

Water Year 2017 began with above-average rainfall in October in all three Sierra Nevada regions monitored continuously by DWR. Northern California's wettest October in 30 years sparked optimism for a robust water year. November saw below-average precipitation in all three regions, but wet weather returned in December and produced above-average rainfall in the three regions. Rainfall measured from October 1 through December 27 at DWR's 19 key monitoring stations totaled 150 percent of the stations' combined historical average during that period.

As the three traditionally wettest months of the year began on December 1, the statewide snowpack's water content was just 61 percent of average on that date. Relatively warm temperatures had tended to produce rain rather than snow in the mountains, but the cold storm that arrived last weekend improved the snowpack up to 75 percent of the Christmas Day average. The snowpack today holds 72 percent of the December 27th average water content.

California is three months into what could become its sixth consecutive year of drought. State Climatologist Michael Anderson said, "October was one of our wettest on record, and December has produced a nice rebound from November's below-average precipitation. California needs sustained above-average precipitation and a decent snowpack to overcome the previous years of drought."

Electronic snowpack readings from about 100 “snow pillows” in the Sierra Nevada are available on the Internet [here](#). For earlier readings, click the calendar icon below the map, select a date, then Refresh Data.

Water Year 2017 precipitation can be found at [this link](#); look in the right-hand column for the Northern Sierra 8-station index for updated rainfall readings in the critical northern portion of the state. The San Joaquin 5-station and Tulare Basin 6-station links are also on this page.

Electronic reservoir readings are found [here](#).

Media Driving and Parking:

Media should stay abreast of road conditions and be prepared to walk through snow, which could be deep, and to equip vehicles with chains. Survey will begin at 11 a.m., with results distributed in a press release by early afternoon. Media should not arrive before 10 a.m. due to the landowner’s concerns; early arrivals may be towed. Avoid blocking the driveway at the landowner’s home. Parking zones are indicated in the graphic below. Note that **no parking is allowed along Sierra-at-Tahoe Road**.



Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. declared a state of drought emergency on January 17, 2014. Visit <http://drought.ca.gov> to learn how California is dealing with the effects of the drought. For water conservation information, visit [Save Our Water](#):



Statewide Snowpack Water Content -- January 1 Average (10.2 inches)

Year	Percent of January 1 Average
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2002	162
2003	162
2004	142
2005	159
2006	117
2007	61
2008	59
2009	78
2010	87
2011	209
2012	20
2013	137
2014	20
2015	47
2016	103